



Friends of Wireless Hill Newsletter Summer 2015

The Friends meet on the 2nd Monday of each month at the Capital Radio Room, Wireless Hill Park at 7.00pm.

Weeding/planting activities are at 8.30am on the 2nd and 4th Sunday.

FLOWERS SEEN IN SPRING

Once again we had an excellent display of flowers in September for the annual Wild Flower Walk, which was enjoyed by over 70 visitors. The donkey orchids (*Diurus magnifica*) and Kangaroo Paws (*Anigozanthus manglesii*) were particularly impressive but seven other species of orchids were easily seen from the sealed paths together with over forty five other native flowers.

This year has been unusually hot. Although we had some heavy downpours, the mean rainfall this spring has been very low. However, we have found most of the flowers normally seen in October and November though some in fewer numbers. Seedlings planted in May are surviving with the help of special watering

ANIMAL SIGHTINGS

Lizards have been active with regular sightings of Western Bearded Dragon (*Pogona minor*) and Bobtail (*Tiliqua rugosa*), and also the occasional Dugite (*Pseudonaja affinis*). The appearance of blossoms in the trees has attracted honey eating birds such as Red and Western Wattle Birds as well as those interested in insects. This year, while walking in the evening, several people have been rewarded by the sight of Tawny Frogmouths and also bats. The Friends are hoping to put up boxes for bats and small birds to encourage their presence and for identification.

TREES IN SUMMER

Two common gum trees, Marri (*Corymbia calophylla*) and Jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*), are already beginning to blossom. Particularly impressive this year are the WA Christmas trees scattered round the Park.



Bearded dragon (photo by Keith Lightbody)



WA Christmas tree (*Nuytsia floribunda*) flowering at Wireless Hill (photo by Margaret Matthews)

RAINBOW BEE-EATERS ON WIRELESS HILL

Throughout the year, many small birds can be seen (or heard) at the tops of trees collecting insects. These include thornbills (*Acanthiza*) and pardolotes (*Pardolotus*). In September they are joined by the summer migrants Rainbow Bee-eaters (*Merops ornatus*). Many photographers come to Wireless Hill to welcome these beautiful birds.

Rainbow Bee-eaters can often be heard before they are seen. They have a high-pitched vibrating whistle in flight or while perched on exposed leafless branches. The birds are basically green with yellow throat and black extending from the slender curved bill to the nape of the neck. Other colours are apparent in flight. When they first arrive they have two long feathers extending from the black tail – longer in the male – but these quickly become damaged during nesting.

The nests are at the end of tunnels, up to a metre long, dug in the sand. They contain four or more eggs which are tended by both sexes. The adults often catch insects on the wing, including bees and wasps. They shake these violently to remove the sting before eating or feeding the young.

Because they nest in the sand, Rainbow Bee-eaters are very vulnerable to foxes, dogs and domestic cats. It is important to keep dogs on leads, cats inside at night and to avoid walking off the paths to avoid crushing the burrows.

The birds return north in April to spend the winter months in northern Australia, PNG or Indonesia.

Kate Creed



Photos by Keith Lightbody

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

We look forward to seeing you on Wireless Hill

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